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In My Father's Boots

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In My Father's Boots

red rubber body
black rigged bottom
caked in white mud.

The boots lay hidden in the closet,
never cleaned,
not worn in years.

Perhaps, to my Dad,
these boots were shackles,
binding him to the grinder's
spinning, screaming blades.
They were the awkward weight
of dreams unrealized,
of a thousand empty bottles,
of a body broken by strain.
Perhaps, that's why he left them behind.

The musk of the mill still remains on them,
the stink of wood, steel and heat.
Reaching inside, there is an aura of sweat,
of hellish days and nights.
Mom has yet to get rid of the boots,
though she knows he'll never need them again.
But, there they remain,
in the closet, behind the boxes,
a silent,
pungent,
brutal
reminder.